Lafayette Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 133, Lafayette, California 94549

President: Oliver Hamlin (o. 283-6822; h. 284-1446)
Editor: Shirley Thomson (o. 284-1166; h. 284-2995)

Vol. XVIII, No. 1
February 1991

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

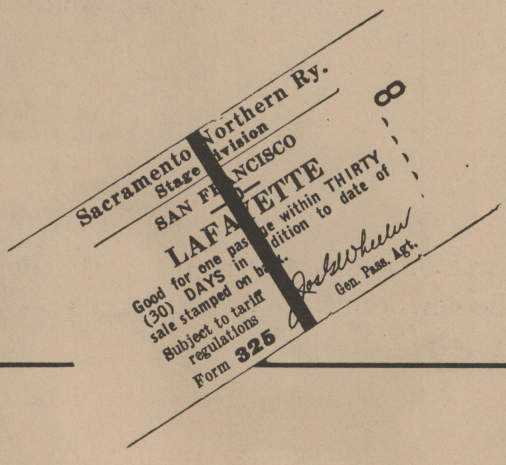
The new year is a time for looking ahead to some of our upcoming activities and also for looking back at some of our recent happenings. We have an evening program scheduled for Tuesday, March 12, with an interesting review of old railroads in Contra Costa. How many of you remember seeing the old Sacramento Northern train running through Lafayette? See page three for details. We also plan to conduct walking tours of historic Lafayette again in 1991 for our fourth-grade schoolchildren—and perhaps a tour for adults as well. Would you be interested?

Our group was fascinated by Ray Peters's lively rendition of the life of Elam Brown which he presented—complete with costume of the era—at our November program meeting. A transcription of his interesting talk is now filed in the LHS archives in the Lafayette library under Oral History. Check it out if you are interested.

The rotating historical displays at Lucky Stores continue to be changed every couple of months, thanks to Bill and Irma Somerton. The current display features the Lafayette business district with many old photos side by side with the new. Soon the display will feature the history of railroads in Contra Costa. Check it out.

Annual dues are requested again for 1991 at the same rate as last year, $10 per year per family. We would appreciate your prompt response to the notice contained in this newsletter.

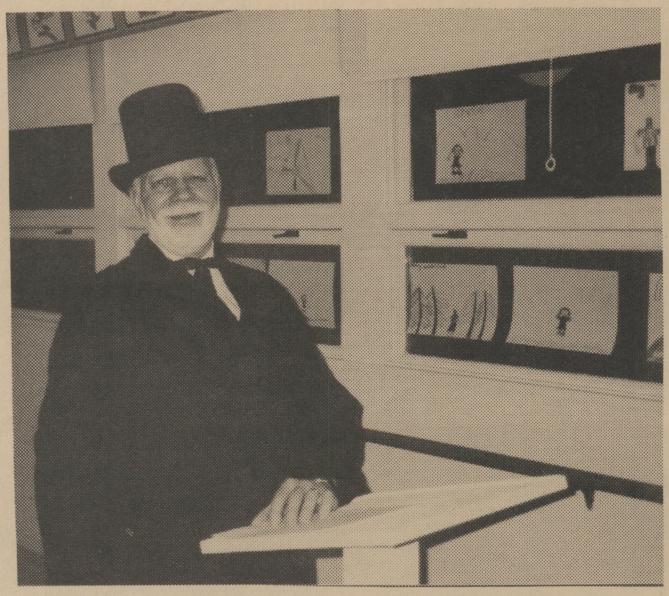
Save the date for our annual meeting and POTLUCK DINNER to be held on Tuesday, May 14. More on this later.

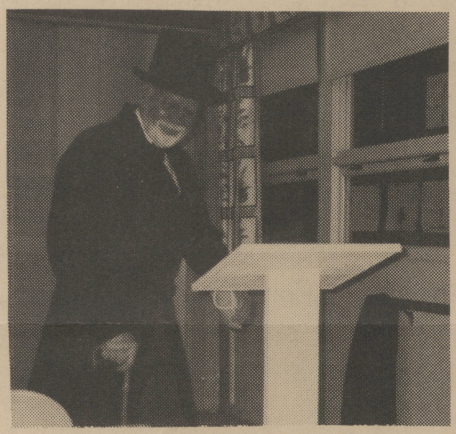

Sacramento Northern Ry.
Stage Division
SAN FRANCISCO
LAFAYETTE
Good for one passage within THIRTY (30) DAYS in addition to date of sale stamped on back.
Subject to tariff regulations
Form 326
Gen. Pass. Agt.

Best regards,

Ollie –

Oliver D. Hamlin





Above and left: Squire Elam Brown—the man and his story—as presented by Ray Peters at the November program meeting.

If You Have Old Photographs . . .

The Society is grateful to the many people who have provided photos and other documents for our archives. The Sacramento Northern materials and photos used in this newsletter, for example, came from people who thought to save some of the "trivial" things of days gone by. Please keep us in mind when you clean up or discard an old photograph collection. > >

1990–1991 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

President	*Oliver Hamlin*
Vice President	*Ray Peters*
Treasurer	*Nancy Holtzapple*
Recording Secretary	*Ruth Dyer*
Corresponding Secretary	*Jack Bailey*
Annual Potluck Dinner	*Richard Johnson*
Archives / Hist. Displays	*Bill & Irma Somerton*
Book Sales	*Ruth Dyer*
Fire Engine	*George Wasson*
Landmarks	*Bill Wakeman*
	Bob & Collette Means
Membership	*Jack & Barbara Bailey*
Oral History	*George Wasson*
Newsletter	*Shirley Thomson*
Program	*Jop & Irene Van Overveen*
Publicity	*Bill Somerton*
Walking Tours	*Collette Means*
(Without portfilio)	*GeorgeEly*

DUES

Family Membership	*$10.00*
Student Membership	*$2.50*
Life Membership	*$100.00*
Business Membership	*$50.00*

Volunteer Needed

Would you be able to transcribe oral history tapes now and again? We could use your help. If interested, please call Oliver Hamlin at 283-6822. > >

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN . . .

Payment of $10 for a family membership will keep your name on our active list for 1991. Please complete the membership information form at the end of the newsletter and return in the envelope provided. Checks should be made payable to LHS. Thanks. > >

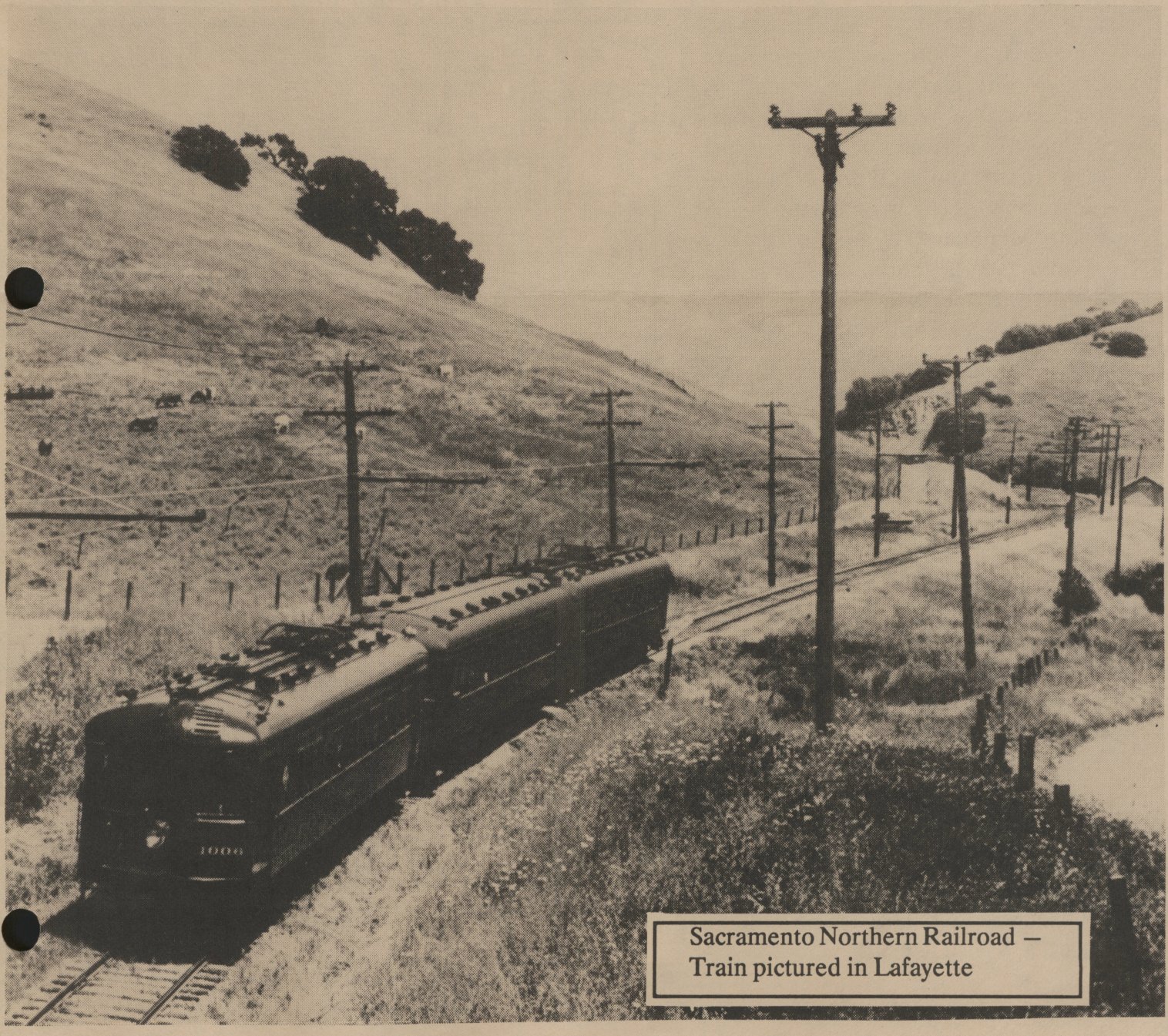
PROGRAM MEETING

Harre DeMoro to Speak:

"Railroads in Contra Costa"

St. Anselm's Episcopal Church – 682 Michael Lane, Lafayette
7:30 p.m. – Tuesday, March 12, 1991

For information, call Jop Van Overveen (283-3650, evenings) or Oliver Hamlin (283-6822 days).



Sacramento Northern Railroad –
Train pictured in Lafayette

Thanks, Betsy!
Welcome, Collette!

In the coming spring—probably with a sigh of relief, and certainly with hearty thanks from the LHS Board—Betsy Willcuts will transfer her years-long responsibility for the Walking Tours program to Collette Means.

The highly successful program making local history vivid and relevant to Lafayette's fourth-grade students was organized and powered by Betsy and a small team of capable volunteers. They worked long and effective hours finding and developing good teaching materials, writing tour information, helping with classroom presentations, and, finally, in guiding student groups through the city and cemetery. Much credit for the success of the 1990 school program is given to Lafayette School Board Member Mary McCosker who willingly stepped in with energy and enthusiasm when needed.

Besides the carefully coordinated program for the schools, over the years the Walking Tours Committee has led—on an as-needed basis— a great number of Scout troops and a variety of student groups (as well as curious adults) on similar tours of old Lafayette.

Under Betsy's direction, this program has very likely directly reached more people than any other work the Society has undertaken.

Thanks, Betsy, for time and talent so generously shared. We cannot forget the hundreds of hours you have given, as well, to LHS archives, and to the many projects that are our reason for being. We wish you continued success in your work with the Oakland Museum and hope to keep you in LHS activities.

We enthusiastically welcome Collette Means and wish her success. > >

By Train from Lafayette

Our own Bill Wakeman, subject of a fine feature story by Ingrid Nordemar in the January 30 issue of the *Contra Costa Sun*, described travel in the 1930s:

"To get into Oakland or San Francisco, Lafayette residents took either the old tunnel—high in the hills—or the train they caught at the West Lafayette station—the end of School Street.... The train took them along Glenside Drive, past St. Mary's College, through Moraga, Canyon, Redwood and Shepherd canyons and into a tunnel, which led to Oakland. Then they took a ferry across the Bay."

Bill used the train to travel to and from Concord each day when he was a student at Concord's Diablo Union High School—a 20- or 30-minute trip. > >

JUNE 1, 1913. 35

MANY VISIT MT. DIABLO REGION

The Memorial Day Excursion Proves Success: Lots Sell Rapidly.

The excursion to the New Town Site of Lafayette on Decoration Day proved such a success that the H. H. Burgess Company will respeat the excursion today. Many people who had been considering purchasing here, closed for their lots at once as soon as they heard of the additional improvements that are to be installed. A modern sewerage system, with the latest and most improved septic tank method of disposal, is to be put in, and ornamental features consisting of three concrete bridges across Walnut Creek, columns, vases, seats, etc.

A block of thirty lots was sold to one buyer by J. Fromberger, sales manager of the Burgess Company. It is the intention of the purchaser to erect at once several pretty pretty bungalows. Architect Applegarth of San Francisco has been engaged to draw the plans and as soon as they are completed construction will begin.

What with these new homes and the many commercial enterprises starting up at the new town site Lafayette gives promise of becoming one of the most popular places along the line of the Oakland and Antioch Electric Ry. The lumber yard and the nursery have already opened up, and there is a rumor that construction will start on a modern hotel before many weeks pass.

Over four thousand people visited the Mount Diablo country on Decoration Day. The Burgess Company reports good sales in properties, many of those buying intending to go into fruit and walnut raising.

Thanks for Newsletter Items

Our thanks to Ruth Dyer for providing a number of interesting items for the newsletter; the 1913 newspaper article reprinted here is from Contra Costa County Historical Society's History Center files.

We welcome your articles or items suitable for reprinting in the newsletter. > >

Lafayette Historical Society

POST OFFICE BOX 133 LAFAYETTE, CALIF. 94549

MEMBER INFORMATION

last name	first name	spouse's first name
street address	phone number	
city, state, zip code	date	

Annual dues: Please check appropriate box, attach check in the amount shown, and mail to Lafayette Historical Society, P.O. Box 133, Lafayette, California 94549.

[ ] $10.00 - Family membership
[ ] $ 2.50 - Student membership
[ ] $ 50.00 - Business membership
[ ] $100.00 - Life membership

ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY

Collect, preserve, and make available to researchers and the public Lafayette's records, historic materials, and photographs

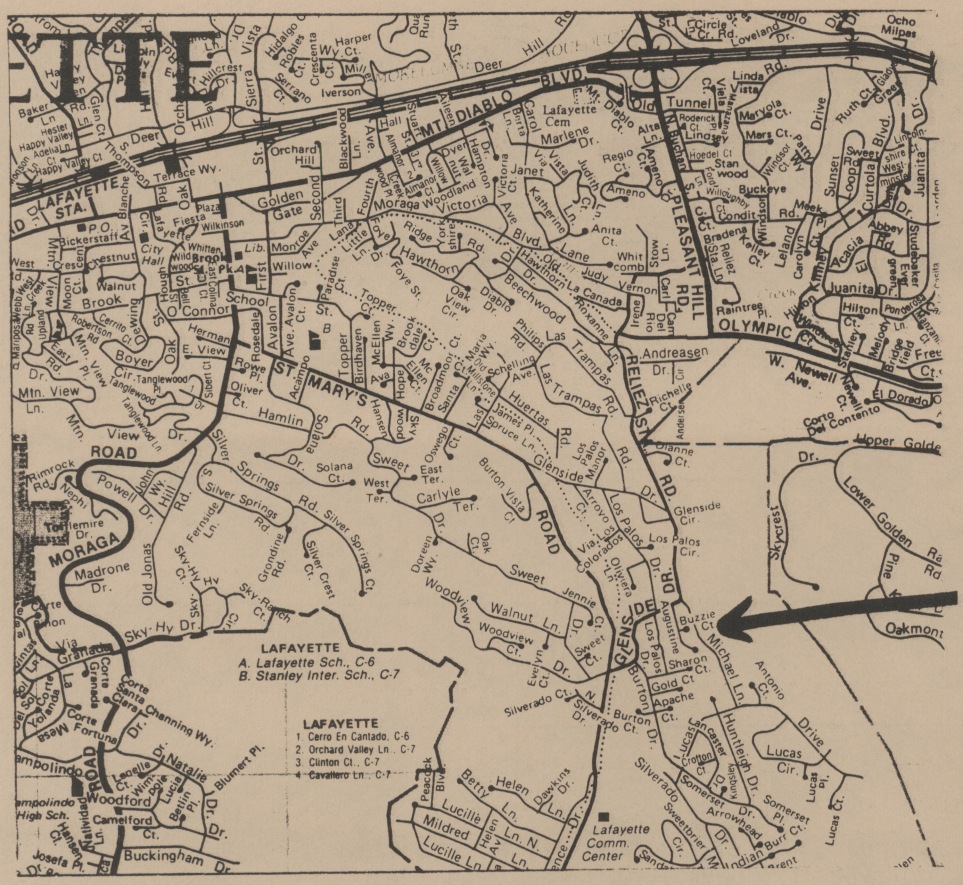
Disseminate historical information and encourage public interest in local history through programs, exhibits, and field trips

Maintain "Old Betsy," Lafayette's early fire engine ~~~ *Conduct walking tours*

Identify and mark historic sites ~ *Publish local history* ~ *Record and preserve oral histories*

PLEASE CHECK AREAS OF INTEREST

[ ] Archives
[ ] Landmarks
[ ] Fire engine
[ ] Telephone committee
[ ] Other:
[ ] Oral history
[ ] Photograph collection
[ ] Newspaper clippings
[ ] Walking tours
[ ] Annual potluck dinner committee

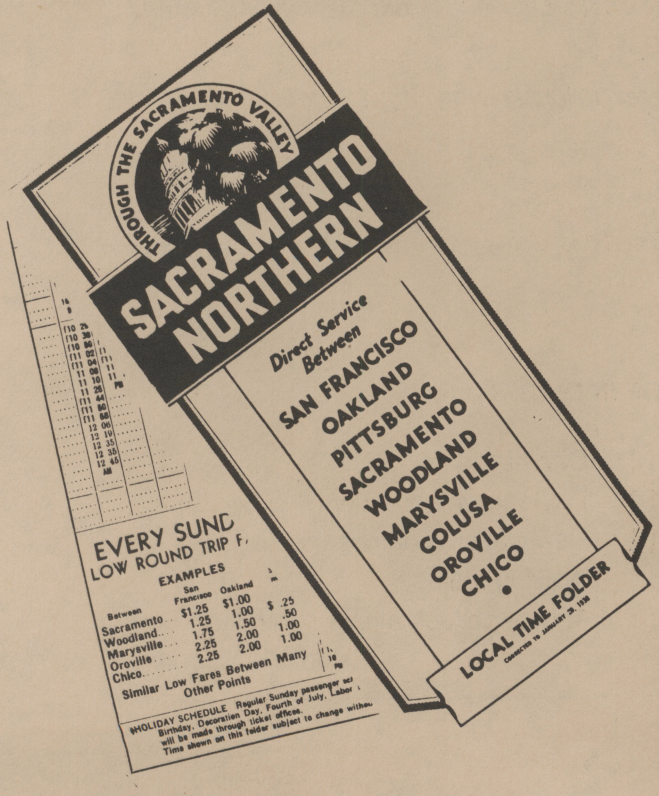


PROGRAM MEETING – RAILROADS IN CONTRA COSTA

7:30 p.m.
Tuesday,
March 12, 1991
St. Anselm's Church

Map shows location of meeting site: St. Anselm's Episcopal Church, at 682 Michael Lane, Lafayette (just .2 mile off Reliez Station Road).

LAFAYETTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 133
Lafayette, California 94549



FIRST CLASS MAIL